

## SERVICE MANAGEMENT AND THE AGILE METHODOLOGY

*This is the first in a series of six postings looking at the impact of the new realm of service provision on the traditional way of managing services as per the ITIL framework. The intention of this series is to spark conversation around the theoretical and practical ways that Service Management must adapt to the new environment it finds itself in.*

The postings cover:

1. **Agile Methodology**
2. DevOps and CI/CD
3. Cloud Computing
4. Digital Transformation
5. Lean Thinking
6. Internet of Things (IoT)

### A brief explanation of the Agile Methodology

Agile is both a methodology and a flexible way of thinking about problems and improvement. It applies to all situations where the end result is not known with any great detail.

Consider first, the Manifesto for Agile Development:

*“We are uncovering better ways of delivering services by doing it and helping others do it. Through this work we have come to value:*

**Individuals and interactions** over processes and tools

**Working service** over comprehensive documentation

**Customer collaboration** over contract negotiation

**Responding to change** over following a plan

*That is, while there is value in the items on the right, we value the items on the left more.”*



The objective of the Agile methodology is to move the success criteria of projects from time and budget, to that of quickly delivering workable products that the customer can use and obtain value. Producing units, a Minimum Viable Product (MVP), in a short timeframe. This does NOT mean not planning and documenting. Instead, it means honing these down to enough to make the unit useful and allow the customer to decide where to from here.

When explaining Agile, much of the discussion is about the Backlog, Sprints and Scrums. While these are essential, there are some very important elements, also key to Agile thinking, which deserve equal attention. My favourites are the learning components of Showcasing and Retrospectives. These are the points of engaging with the client for rapid feedback (Showcasing) and reviewing the current sprint to look for better ways to perform (Retrospectives).

Both have their counterparts in Lean Thinking, DevOps and CSI, which supports my belief that these methodologies and frameworks are all integrated and mutually-supportive.

Risk-driven Scheduling is an approach of scheduling the elements of a project which are the least understood (hence highest risk), to be developed first, and presented to the customer. This too is a natural fit for prioritizing units of work within the Agile process.

Another, more recent element of Agile is SAF – Scalable Agile Framework. This provides a framework for Agile management of Programs of work across several concurrent Agile teams. This is a body of knowledge in its own right.



### **What does this mean to Service Management?**

There are two ways to look at how Service Management and Agile support and integrate with each other:

1. The disciplines of Service Management must provide a flexible service to organisations that deliver and maintain services using the Agile methodology
2. The Service Management disciplines themselves must be viewed as services to service providers, and themselves be delivered and maintained using the Agile flow

Let's look at these in more detail.

### **1. Service Management must provide a flexible service to organisations using the Agile methodology**

If organisations are to deliver frequent improvements to end customers, with rapid customer feedback, Service Management must support this. The content of any sprint (or collection of sprints into a Release) must remain dynamic, driven by the showcases.

**Change Management** becomes one of defining 'envelope' changes (releases) while maintaining dynamic scope. Scope change becomes a good thing!

Resources to be used, and Configuration Items (CIs) to be impacted, must remain fairly consistent through the release. As a result of scope change, some resource requirements can be dropped from the Change record, but we should not be adding any at a late stage of the release. Doing so would complicate control and communications regarding the change.

Each Sprint must include generating concise documentation updates to maintain the understanding of the service. An MVP cannot be considered useable if the user guide is not up to date.

There must be a means of capturing the feedback of the release, as part of Change Management, and feeding it into either the Product or Sprint Backlog.

**Configuration Management** must capture updates automatically, from the authorised Changes. CI updates committed when the implementation / activation button is pressed. Complete or partial regression of updates performed automatically should the change be backed out.

Monitoring of Service Levels, Events and Incidents must input into the Change feedback. So too must the **Service Desk / Customer Experience Portal** feedback into the Change outcome.

**Problem Management** process is to be broken into Use Cases assigned to sprints. These too enter the Backlog queues. Problem priority must form part of the criteria for assigning tasks to sprints.

A new look and feel is required for all of the Service Management disciplines. Which is only to be expected since they must support a whole different Service Providing customer.

## **2. The Service Management disciplines themselves to be delivered and maintained using the Agile flow**

All of the Service Management disciplines can apply the Agile methodology to continue to enhance the services they provide. Each discipline must perform its own Continual Service Improvement (CSI) and regularly deliver MVSIs (Minimum Viable Service Improvement) as a result of Sprints.

Complete Showcases on process improvements, with the users of the processes, to decide the next set of improvements, aligned to what the user needs.

Retrospectives held to reflect on how the previous MVSIs went, regarding user acceptance, benefit, possible next steps, any need for a pivot.

The Agile Methodology becomes both the customer and the supplier in the new realm of Service Management.